



**TORRIDGE THIRD AGE GROUP** <https://u3asites.org.uk/torrige>  
**NEWSLETTER**

**Issue 561**

**January 2026**



**Comments from the Chair**

I hope you all had an enjoyable Christmas and New Year. As you read this 2026 will have been rung in and (maybe) Christmas decorations taken down. Perhaps we will leave the twinkling lights up to cheer us during the gloomy nights of early January? Here's looking forward to the lighter evenings and Spring sunshine.

For those who attend the **Monthly Lunch at the Royal** and park in **Clarence Wharf** car park. We understand that the car park will be closed for building work from **January 5th** (and I suspect this will be for some time to come). I have mentioned numerous times to the planners that the reduction to 35 spaces from what was once a 120 plus carpark is ridiculous, but no-one is listening. (Considering this car-park was also the main Bideford access to the Tarka trail for visitors, next summer will be interesting!)

My thanks go out to all the other Committee members and our Group leaders for all their hard work and help in keeping our U3A active and growing during the 2025. Without all these volunteers helping to operate and organise groups and events, there would be no Torrige U3A. I am sure all our members would echo my thoughts and wish to pass their thanks on to all the people running Torrige U3A.

Finally, I hope that you all had a pleasant Christmas and best wishes for the New Year.

**Best Regards**

**Graham Thompson**  
**Chairman Torrige U3A**

**We welcome the following new members this month:** Brian Copleston, Les Davies



**Future coffee morning 2026**

<b>Chairman</b> Graham Thompson	<b>Secretary</b> Carolyn Kelly	<b>Membership Secretary</b> Julie Thompson	<b>Newsletter Editor</b> Andy Robilliard
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## This month's notice board:

### Monthly Lunch :

This month's lunch is on **Wednesday 21st January** please arrive in time to take your seat in the dining room by 12 o'clock.

### Our Speaker will be

Please remember to **book-in with Helen** before taking your seat,

Lunch will be served at **1 o'clock**. (Cost **£18.50** for two courses plus coffee). As usual — Please pay at reception prior to making your way through to the dining room.

Please could those interested in attending :

- Order their choice of meal by **Friday the 16th Jan.**
- if they haven't already done so.
- Contact Helen Summerhayes as follows
- Text or email (preferred)
- Please advise Helen if you are unable to attend, having booked lunch in order that the hotel can be given the correct numbers. Payment to the hotel on the day can be made by cash, card or cheque (payable The Royal Hotel). If you are paying by cheque you will need to present your cheque guarantee card, this is essential and cheques will not be accepted without it.

### **MENU** — Wednesday 21st January 2026

Roast leg of Pork, Yorkshire pudding, stuffing ball, apple sauce  
Roast potatoes and vegetables.

or

Mixed Seafood Vol-au Vent, creamy dill and white wine sauce  
garden peas and sauteed potatoes

or

Jacket Potato with Spiced beef chilli, bistro salad, house coleslaw.

or

Stuffed baked Pepper, vegetable casserole and sweet potato  
falafels

or

Mixed meat or Cheddar cheese salad, chutney, house coleslaw  
egg, pickled onion and minted new potatoes

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Fruit Crumble and custard

or

Lemon Cheesecake

or

Fruit Salad

or

Cheese and biscuits

or

Ice Cream

Coffee

**Miscellaneous:** you do not receive your electronic version or have queries regarding the printed Newsletter, please contact; - **Graham Thompson**

**Availability & Booking of the Upper Room :** - For details, see website, programme in Upper room or contact: - **Graham Thompson**

**Group leader changes :** - Please send note of any change in name or contact details to the group leader co-ordinator : **Dennis Pavitt**

**Upper Room payments :** - Payments due for the Upper Room, etc. should be passed to the Treasurer : - **Heather Williams**

**Proposed events :** - If you are planning to hold an event, please contact **Graham Thompson** first to ensure that there are no clashes.

## GROUP REPORTS



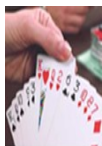
**Badminton** – Group Contacts  
**Wednesday:** Diane Care  
Anne Scott

We meet each Wednesday at 10am for an hour of fun badminton at the Atlantic Racquet Centre, Bideford where we use 3 courts. All equipment can be provided free of charge, each session costs £2.50. We are full at present but have a waiting list if you're interested in.



**Bird Watching Group**  
Group Contact: Irene Hahn

As December is a busy month for most people, our members were encouraged to seek out for themselves a Bird Murmuration that was viewable on the other side of Hartland Forest. We look forward to sharing their feedback to those who were unable to get there. This Group is full but I am happy to add to a waiting list.



**Bridge for Improvers**  
Group contacts: Linda Nicholls

Sandy Madden on

Tuesday evening Improvers Bridge is now starting at 6.45 for 2 hours finishing at 8.45 in the Upper Room. We are very happy to welcome new members. We are a friendly group. Over the past year we have sadly lost a few of our members and we would welcome anyone who might think of coming to actually come and 'try us out'. We play standard Acol and are a friendly group enjoying light hearted bridge. Yes there is such a thing! Please come and see for yourselves.



**Book Group 1.**  
Group contact: Pat Pavitt

Instead of our usual meeting this month, we enjoyed a very pleasant lunch at Country Cousins. We will be meeting again in January when our book to discuss will be Talking Heads by Alan Bennett. A Happy New Year to you all.



**Book Group 3.**  
Group contact Jo Sampson

The Armour of Light by Ken Follett  
This book is set in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. The characters in the textile town of Kingsbridge are having to deal with social and economic changes with the replacement of their cottage industries by the mills. With unemployment comes poverty. The poor have no legal rights and have to fight oppression by forming trade unions. Riots are common against the monarchy and aristocracy. Bonaparte spearheads revolution and Britain is drawn into war in Europe. The characters are well drawn and engaging. They bring enlightenment to the social and economic activities of

the period.  
We thoroughly enjoyed it and gave it top marks.  
Jo Sampson



**Canasta**

Group contact : Sally Matthews

We are chugging along quite happily with a convenient number for more good games. The Group is currently full so lookout for vacancies here.



**Crafty Cards & Creative Craft Class.**  
Group contact Alison Tamplin

or Carolyn Kelly

**Crafty Carding**

This Group did not meet in December

**Creative Craft**

This Group did not meet in December



**Croquet.**

Group contact: Anne Young

Croquet has finished for the season, it will begin again in May 2026



**Devon Inns.**

Group contact: Peter Mills

Or Marilyn Clarke

The groups Christmas lunch on December 11th at The Guillemot in Westward Ho! Was a success according to the groups members, who are already lobbying for a rerun at this venue for Xmas 2026, it is a possibility.

Our first outing for 2026 is early in the month of January on the 8th, in line with winter travel requests to be closer to home base, we have booked into The Seagate, The Quay, Appledore, EX391RL ( 01237 472589 ) in my time with Devon Inns, I do not recall us having a lunch here, awaiting with interest the outcome. Meet in the bar between 12 Noon and 12.15

Large public car park across the road, it is a pay for time, allow yourself enough time to relax & enjoy.

The chef & Management at The Seagate have asked us to provide a food pre-order from either their winter main menu and the sandwich and snack/light meals menu.

Would you please let me have your food requirements by Monday 5th Jjclarke@hotmail.co.uk, your attendance as soon as convenient.

Contact petermills666@outlook.com or Marilyn Members or members guests are always welcome to come along to a lunch, without commitment to attend future venues.



**Digital Camera Group 1 & 2**  
Group contact: Nigel Tompkins

**Photography Group 1**

The end of the year brought the best images from all members of both groups. In Group 1, We were 5 in total, this gave us some time so discuss the images and enjoy the food brought to the table.

The images submitted are



No 1 Southern Masked Weaver Dave Parker



No 2. Flower in the Rain Nigel Tompkins



No 3. Lake Louise Canada Jane Irvine



No 4. Mountains in the Austrian Tyrol Michael Hatcher



No 5. Shambles by Night Melvyn Lowther

**Photography Group 2**

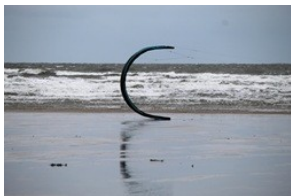


Both Groups entered the best images they personally chose for the year. A good turn out produced again some excellent images. Selection was followed by food

No 1. Arlington Everlasting Flowers Jenny Johns



No 3. Canada Goose Mandy King



No 2. Big C Pauline Coombes



No 4. Humpback Peter Denard



No.5. Red Reflection Judy James



**Discussion Group.**  
Group contact: **Graham Thompson**

Meeting started with a welcome to Graham Thompson. Discussed how to continue next year. Graham explained the Peppercorn rent that is paid for meeting room plus repairs paid by U3A and heating costs. Decided currently we will pay quarterly and as Financial Year starts in April - the cost will be £3 at January meeting. Tea and coffee can be currently left as some left but thought 50p each was a fair sum. Pointed out that U3A is not political or religious based. Respect for peoples opinions should be accepted. Main function being debate and discussion. Talked about where you find out the real truth of matters. Discussed trial by jury and felt system is very medieval and needs changing and the justice system generally. Felt that a lot of money to help families needs to go to right place. Is North Devon rather remote from rest of Devon. Pointed out that we have no major centre or industry here. Discussed how with each new government it is felt money is wasted. Basically a lot of new ministers wanting it done their way.



**Favourite Words Aloud**  
Group contact: Marianne Richards

Bring your favourite short (2 pages max) piece of writing , (yours or someone else's) to read aloud in this small friendly group. Any poignant, funny, uplifting....prose or verse welcome...( Non-political preferably).



**French** Group contact Jane Williams or Debbie Fisher

Our group is conversation based and members have a reasonable level of vocabulary and grammar knowledge. We also listen to native french speakers via you tube. It is not suitable for beginners.



**First Friday Walkers**  
Group contact: Margaret Curtis

Our walk on 6<sup>th</sup> February will be led by Linda and Margaret. Meet at the Weare Giffard car park ready for a 10.30 start. This walk is approximately 3.5 miles long, through pretty woods and along country lanes. Lunch will be at the Torrington Golf Club with menu choices required ONE WEEK in advance. The special menu will be sent to all members when Margaret receives it in January.

There is one longish, gradual ascent and one longish, gradual descent. Directions: From Bideford take the A386 Torrington road and turn left at the junction signed Weare Giffard. Stay on this road and you will arrive at the car park, on the right approximately half a mile past the church. Please note that lunch orders need to be in by 30th January. If you would like to join us, please contact Margaret by 30<sup>th</sup> January.



### **Knit & Stitch Group.**

Group contact: Heather Williams

We meet on the 1st and 3rd Thursday afternoons at 2pm in the Upper Room. We enjoy working on our own projects, finding out about what everyone else is making, having a chat and a cup of tea or coffee



### **History Group**

Group contact: Peter Flacke

The first presentation followed North Devon from the equator where it resided 200 million years ago to its current position, picking up some spectacular geology on the way, and from the first modern humans who arrived here surprisingly late to the Romans who did not find much to interest them in the area. We also heard about some tantalising indications of archaeological remains in Godborough Nature Reserve, near Bideford, not yet uncovered.

With Christmas approaching we then heard the true(ish) story of Good Duke (not King) Wenceslas of Bohemia, born in 905 AD to a decidedly dysfunctional family. His mother had his grandmother strangled with her own veil and Wenceslas the Good, as he became known, was assassinated by his brother Boleslaus the Cruel. Wenceslas acquired a reputation for benign rule during his lifetime which only grew after his death, with his achieving sainthood and national hero status which still survives in the modern day Czech Republic.

Next month we will hear about the Big Stink of Victorian London and the bonfire lighting tradition of Lewes.



### **Let's Talk About Books** Group contact

Chris Moss or Jane Villiers

Our December meeting had no pre-arranged subject but was seasonally enhanced with mince pies to accompany our mid-session teas. The early discussion was a continuation of the previous month's topic of poetry and includ-

ed a comparison of a florid Victorian Christmas poem by Leigh Hunt with a more recent and simpler one by Adrian Mitchell. A suggestion that the Tempest was too heavily male-orientated diverted us into a brief recap of major female Shakespearean roles before we moved on to describe our most recently read books. Starting these, an update on last month's still unfinished 'Homo Deus' included a fresh recommendation but also a spoiler alert that it offered pessimistic warnings about the future of the mankind. David Mitchell was recognised as a very inventive writer although there were some reservations about 'Black Swan Green', his account of a year in the life of a thirteen year old boy, whilst 'Girl, Woman, Other', the Booker Prize winner by Bernadine Evaristo was also said not to be an easy read and with the self-conscious pronoun selection found irritating. We discovered that few of us has looked at 'The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam' and the member who had had found its style unapproachable, whilst 'The Places in-between' by Rory Stewart intrigued, as did its author, but brought with it questions about his constant acceptance of assistance from the poor villagers (and dog) that he met, and of a sense self-flagellation in his account of travel through Afghanistan. Claire Keegan's 'So Late in the Day' was alluded to but description withheld as it is the current subject for another book group. Finally we drew one another's attention to Topsy Books, a new venture in Bideford which combines wine bar and bookshop and currently specialises in sci-fi and fantasy and which we all plan to visit. Our next meeting will look at books given and received as Xmas presents.



### **Mindfulness and Webeing** Group

contact Irene Baxter

This is a new group. Mindfulness will be based on stress reduction courses as used by the NHS and will follow N.I.C.E guidelines. These techniques can be used to assist with daily living. Well-being will involve looking at ways to maintain our wellness and independence as we get older. The group starts in February and meets on the first Thursday of every month between 10.30 and 12 noon in the Upper room.



### **Mah jong**

Morning Grp Contact: Nicky Heading

The group meets from 10am to 12md on most Mondays of the month in the Upper room Northam. All equipment is supplied and the session costs £1.

Our group is now full but I am happy to put interested players on a waiting list. You can contact me on Tel 07879 013132 or nickyheading@hotmail.com



### **Music—Blues/Rock.**

Group Contact: David Mclellan

There was no session in December



### **PickleBall**

Group contact: Ralf Bennett  
telephone, text, or WhatsApp on

Our pickleball groups at the Atlantic Racquet Center are increasingly popular.

Monday 10am to 11am £3. Group leader Christine Ker

Monday 11am to 12 noon £3. Group leader John Curry

In 2026 we are seeking to increase to 3 groups.

Currently there are no further courts available to U3A but we are hopeful that this will change early in the year. NEW !!!

At this time we can accommodate players who can manage a 2 hour session for just £5 on Mondays from 10am to 12 noon.

Equipment is provided free.

If you have never played before but want to give it a go come along.

YOUR FIRST SESSION IS FREE TOO.



### **Playreading.**

Group contact: Christine Holmes

The Playreading Group meets at members homes fortnightly at 2pm. We read a variety of plays including dramas, comedies and thrillers provided by Exeter Library. Currently we have a vacancy for someone to read male roles.



### **Practical Philosophy**

Group Contact: **Stuart Mealing**

**Or Irene Baxter**

Our numbers were reduced due to the usual seasonal problems but an entertaining discussion recapped on, and updated, the subjects of all our previous meetings held in 2025. Connections between those subjects soon became evident and there was a strong sense of a network of ideas that had been consistent throughout the year and had permeated all our meetings. Perhaps they could be said to be the issues of the day as we see them. Artificial intelligence (AI) featured heavily with its presence ubiquitous and its future looming largely unknown and of increasing concern. New topics we raised ranged from the ethics of hacking and cyber fraud to the consequences for victims of 'nudifying' apps and the issues of interacting with chatbots. Questions about the future of truth and of the human race arose and we also speculated in passing on where exactly the 'cloud' was and on its vast use of electrical power - which in some places now generates heating for homes.

Discussion on the nature, definition and ending of life, on abortion, extinction and suicide, and on relevant opinions from the Dali Lama pointed us towards several new subjects for discussion in 2026 as did questions about what needs to be taught and learnt in today's world and why. We looked again, in the light of recent news items, at the possible over-diagnosis or pathologising of illnesses which might once have been considered merely slight variations of the norm and at the new legal

definition of sex, seen in the context of changes the WI and others now feel obliged to make to their membership rules and of this week's judgement regarding a nurse required to share a changing room with a transsexual doctor. In the absence of our leader on the topic we struggled to significantly update our understanding of quantum theory but we looked again briefly at sovereignty, freedom of expression, the philosophy of ageing and populism, with other defined topics such as free will, AI, and our new morality having already woven their ways throughout our discussion. Our provisional subject for next month is Buddhism



### **Science, Technology & Society.**

Group contact: **Barry Zussman:**

Happy New Year everyone! For our first meeting of 2026, on Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> January (2:30pm in the Upper Room), we'll be hearing the story - billions of years in the making - of a chemical substance so familiar that we barely give it a second thought. It's found everywhere, from the vastness of the oceans to the complex microcosm of the human body. We spread it on our food, and even on our roads! It is, of course, salt, and, in this wide-ranging presentation, David Dickinson will reveal its secrets, from the very beginning, to its pivotal role in shaping human history, both societally and technologically.

Please note: This group is currently full, so if you're not already registered, please contact me and I'll start a waiting-list.



### **Short/Soft Tennis** - Group Contacts:

Tuesday session: Janet Broomhead (Jan)

Thursday session: Lynn Woolley

We meet at 2pm for an hour every Tuesday and at 3pm every Thursday at the Atlantic Racquet Centre. All equipment is provided free and an hour long session cost £3. No experience necessary. All equipment supplied. Fun and exercise guaranteed. Both the Tuesday and Thursday short tennis groups are now full. We will keep a short list if required.



### **Snooker (Tue & Wed)**

Current Contact: Dennis Pavitt

The U3A Snooker Group has two separate weekly sessions on Tuesday and Wednesday mornings at the Kingsley Hall in Westward Ho! We spend two enjoyable hours trying to re-capture past snooker skills and enjoying the company of similar snooker enthusiasts. If you would like further information please give me a call or send me an email.



### **Table Tennis.**

Group Contact: **Christine Isaac**

The Table Tennis Group are still enjoying our sessions at the Youth Centre and are gradually picking up numbers again. We would be happy to see any new players that might wish to give us a try



**Beginners Table Tennis.**  
Group Contact: Marion Coles

We are currently welcoming new players , come and join us, we are a friendly group, and welcome complete beginners and those who perhaps haven't played for a while



**Watercolour Groups 1&2.**  
Contact: Brenda Cammann

**These two groups are on hold until further notice**



**Walking Cricket**  
Group contact: Dennis Pavitt

This will restart next year



**Third Friday Walkers.**  
Group contact: **Linda Burgess-Bentley**

The walk for January will be our good old favourite, the River Exe and Exeter Quay walk. Details as follows:  
On Friday, 16 January, meet inside Barnstaple railway station at 9.05am to take the 9.35am train to St David's Station, Exeter. The cheapest parking is the new Long-Stay Seven Brethren car park, Barnstaple which is just past the new Leisure Centre. It currently remains £2.50 for the day. The railway car park is £4.50 per day. The train journey is about one hour and ten minutes. From St David's Station we will walk along the flood basin then join the River Exe at the weir where we will stop for our coffee. Afterwards we will continue on to Exeter Quay. The walk from the station to Exeter Quay is about 3 miles on an easy, level footpath. Lunch will be at the Samuel Jones on Exeter Quay. They would like a pre-order. After lunch, we will make our way to Exeter Central Station, Queen Street for the return journey, a walk of about 0.75 mile. The walk leads gently uphill as far as the cathedral then we take a level path to the station. The trains back to Barnstaple are roughly one per hour (2.14pm, 3.14pm and 4.13pm). Rail Fares: Standard return fare = £14.60. Senior Rail-card return fare = £9.70 per person. Groups of 3 or more, return fare = £9.70 per person. To qualify for group fare, one person only pays at the kiosk for the whole group. (When booking, please ask for a return fare to Exeter Central Station). If you would like to join us please let me know by midday on Tuesday 13 January and let me have your choice from the Samuel Jones menu ([samueljonesexeter.co.uk](http://samueljonesexeter.co.uk)) Don't forget your woolly hat as it can be cold along the River Exe in January! I look forward to see you soon, Linda



**Ukulele group.**  
Group contact **Richard Patmore**

The ukulele group finished what has been a very busy year with a wide variety of gigs, at the Bluebell home in Westward Ho! where we entertained with a varied selection of Christmas songs and carols. Our first performance next year will be in early February when we shall be playing some of the new songs that we have been practicing.

# DIARY PAGE

ACTIVITY	DATE	START	END	LOCATION
<b><u>Groups below meet every week</u></b>				
Badminton	Wednesdays	10:00	11:00	Atlantic Racquets Centre
Bridge for Improvers	Every Tuesday evening	18:45	20:45	Upper Room St Margarets
Croquet (Braunton)	Weekly on Tuesday - (May to Sept)	14:00	16:00	Croquet Club Barnstaple
French	Every Tuesday	10:30	12:30	Upper Room St Margarets
Pickle Ball Group 1	Every Monday	10:00	11:00	Atlantic Racquet Centre
Pickle Ball Group 1	Every Monday	11:00	12:00	Atlantic Racquet Centre
Short/Walking Tennis Thursday	Every Thursday afternoon	15:00	16:00	Atlantic Racquets Centre
Short/Walking Tennis Tuesday	Every Tuesday Afternoon	14:00	15:00	Atlantic Racquets Centre
Snooker on Tuesday	Every Tuesday from 10 a.m till 12 noon	10:00	12:00	Kingsley Snooker Hall
Snooker on Wednesday	Every Wednesday 10 am - 12 noon	10:00	12:00	Kingsley Snooker Hall
Table Tennis	Every Thursday	10:00	12:00	Bideford Youth Centre on the Pill
Table Tennis for beginners	Every Thursday between 10.00 and 11.00	10:00	11:00	Atlantic Racquets Centre
<b><u>Groups below meet two or three times a month</u></b>				
Canasta Group	TBA	10:30	12:30	Westward Ho
Knit and Stitch group	1st & 3rd Thursdays	14:00	16:00	Upper Room St Margarets
Mahjong Morning	1st and 3rd Monday between	10:00	12:00	Upper Room St Margarets
Play Reading	Every fortnight on Mondays at 2pm	14:00	16:00	private members houses various
Ukulele Group	1st & 3rd Mondays of every month	14:00	16:00	Northam Hall
<b><u>Groups below meet once a month</u></b>				
Bird Watching	TBA			Contact Group Leader
Book Group 1	3rd Tuesday in every month	14:00	16:00	Upper Room St Margarets
Book Group 3	1st Tuesday in every month	14:30	16:00	Upper Room St Margarets
Crafty Cards	3rd Wednesday in every month	09:30	12:00	Upper Room St Margarets
Creative Craft Class	3rd Thursday in the month	10:00	12:00	Upper Room St Margarets
Devon Inns	2nd Thursday in every month	12:00	14:00	See Newsletter or Contact Group Lead
Digital Camera Group 1	2nd Wednesday every month	14:00	16:30	Upper Room St Margarets
Digital Camera Group 2	3rd Wednesday in Month	15:00	17:30	Upper Room St Margarets
Discussion Group	1st Wednesday in every month	10:30	12:30	Upper Room St Margarets
Favourite Words Aloud	2nd Monday of the Month	10:00	12:00	Upper Room St Margarets
First Friday Walkers	1st Friday in every month	10:30	13:00	See Newsletter or Contact Group Lead
History Group	2nd Thursday of Month	10:00	12:00	Upper Room St Margarets
Lets Talk About Books	4th Monday of the month at 2.00 pm	14:00	16:00	Upper Room St Margarets
Mindfulness and Well-Being	1st Thursday each month	10:30	12:00	Upper Room St Margarets
Monthly Lunch	3rd Wednesday in Month	12:00	15:00	The Royal Hotel,Bideford
Music - Blues/Rock	2nd Thursday in every month	14:00	16:00	Upper Room St Margarets
Practical Philosophy	2nd Tuesday in every month	14:00	16:00	Upper Room St Margarets
Science, Technology & Society	4th Tuesday in every month	14:30	16:30	Upper Room St Margarets
Scrabble	2nd Monday of the month	10:00	12:00	Upper Room St Margarets
Third Friday Walkers	3rd Friday in every month	10:30	13:00	See Newsletter or Contact Group Lead
Watercolour Group 1 (Improvers)	First Wednesday of the month	14:00	16:00	The Northam Community Centre
Watercolour Group 2 (Beginners)	Fourth Monday of the month	10:00	12:00	Upper Room St Margarets